

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (withdrawn) A method of preparing a polishing pad suitable for chemical mechanical polishing of a semiconductor wafer, comprising:
 - providing a polishing pad having an hygroscopic absorbency;
 - soaking the polishing pad with an aqueous medium for a time sufficient to equilibrate the pad to prior to polishing with the pad; and
 - placing the polishing pad on a polishing platen subsequent to the soaking.
2. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein soaking includes soaking at about 10 °C to 45 °C and ambient pressure.
3. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein soaking includes soaking at ambient temperature and pressure.
4. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein soaking includes soaking in aqueous media for a time sufficient to equilibrate the pad to at least about 10% to about 50% or more of the pad's maximum absorbency.
5. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein the pad comprises a polymer selected from the group consisting of:

6.6 nylon;

6.12 nylon;

polyketone; and

polyurethane.

6. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein the soaking is performed for a time ranging from about 3 hours to about 2 weeks.

7. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein the soaking is performed for a time ranging from about 3 hours to about 48 hours.

8. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein the soaking is performed for a time ranging from about 15 hours to about 30 hours.

9. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 1 wherein the aqueous media includes an additive.

10. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 9 wherein the additive comprises a buffer.

11. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 10 wherein the buffer is an acidic buffer having a pH ranging from about 2.0 to about 7.0.

12. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 10 wherein the buffer is a basic buffer having a pH ranging from about 7.0 to about 14.0.

13. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 9 wherein the additive is selected from the group consisting of an oxidant, an abrasive, and an organic amine.

14. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 13 wherein the organic amine is ethanol amine.

15. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 13 wherein the abrasive is selected from the group consisting of alumina and silica.

16. (withdrawn) A method of packaging a polishing pad for use in polishing a semiconductor wafer, comprising:

placing a polishing pad in a container configured to retain an aqueous medium therein; placing an aqueous medium in the container in a quantity sufficient to allow the polishing pad to equilibrate; and

sealing the container.

17. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 16 wherein said placing includes maintaining the aqueous media at about 10 °C to 45 °C and ambient pressure.

18. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 16 wherein said placing includes maintaining the aqueous media at ambient temperature and pressure.

19. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 16 wherein said placing includes maintaining the aqueous media for a time sufficient to equilibrate the pad to at least about 10% to about 50% or more of the pad's maximum absorbency.

20. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 16 wherein the pad comprises a polymer selected from the group consisting of:

6,6 nylon;

6,12 nylon;

polyketone; and

polyurethane.

21. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 16 wherein the aqueous medium includes an additive.

22. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 21 wherein the additive comprises a buffer.

23. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 22 wherein the buffer is an acidic buffer having a pH ranging from about 2.0 to about 7.0.

24. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 22 wherein the buffer is a basic buffer having a pH ranging from about 7.0 to about 14.0.

25. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 21 wherein the additive is selected from the group consisting of an oxidant, an abrasive, and an organic amine.

26. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 25 wherein the organic amine is ethanol amine.

27. (withdrawn) The method as recited in Claim 25 wherein the abrasive is selected from the group consisting of alumina and silica.

28. (currently amended) A packaged polishing pad, comprising:
a sealable moisture tight package having a dimension sufficient to contain a polishing pad therein; and

a polishing pad soaked in an aqueous medium and located within the sealable moisture tight package, wherein said polishing pad is configured for use in chemical mechanical polishing of a semiconductor wafer in conjunction with a polishing slurry.

29. (currently amended) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 28 wherein the aqueous media is ~~maintained~~ at about 10 °C to 45 °C and ambient pressure.

Claim 30 (canceled)

31. (currently amended) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 28 wherein the polishing pad is equilibrated with the aqueous media is maintained for a time sufficient to equilibrate the pad to at least about 10% to about 50% ~~or more~~ of the pad's maximum absorbency.

32. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 28 wherein the pad comprises a polymer selected from the group consisting of:

6,6 nylon;

6,12 nylon;

polyketone; and

polyurethane.

33. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 28 wherein the aqueous medium includes an additive.

34. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 28 wherein the additive comprises a buffer.

35. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 34 wherein the buffer is an acidic buffer having a pH ranging from about 2.0 to about 7.0.

36. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 34 wherein the buffer is a basic buffer having a pH ranging from about 7.0 to about 14.0.

37. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 33 wherein the additive is selected from the group consisting of an oxidant, an abrasive, and an organic amine.

38. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 37 wherein the organic amine is ethanol amine.

39. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 37 wherein the abrasive is selected from the group consisting of alumina and silica.

40. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 28 wherein the sealable moisture tight package is comprised of a flexible plastic material.

41. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 40 wherein the flexible plastic material is a heat sealable material.

42. (original) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 40 wherein the flexible plastic material is mechanically sealable.

Original Claim 43-45 (canceled)

46. (new) The packaged polishing pad as recited in Claim 28 wherein the polishing slurry further includes an abrasive.